

Falling commodity prices, labor shortages, new workforce mandates — 2016 was challenging for many Oregon farm and ranch families.

But Farm Bureau members ended the year with important accomplishments to be proud of: Hundreds participated in the I Farm I Vote grassroots effort this November; the Measure 97 tax on gross receipts was handily defeated; and an impressive 86 percent of Oregon Farm Bureau (OFB)-endorsed candidates were elected.

“As farmers and ranchers look ahead to the 2017 Oregon Legislative Session, it’s critical that we continue to stand together as one community with a strong, united voice,” said OFB Director of State Public Policy Jenny Dresler.

Following is a preview of challenges and opportunities for the 2017 session, which starts on Feb. 1.

Labor

Despite tireless advocacy by Farm Bureau, the 2015 and 2016 legislative sessions resulted in expensive new workforce mandates that burden farm and ranch families, including the paid sick leave law and the minimum wage hike.

Unfortunately, the 2017 session will bring more labor-related bills that pose new threats to Oregon agriculture.

One of these battles will be against



OFB President Barry Bushue testifying at a hearing during the 2016 Oregon Legislative Session.

state-mandated scheduling for employers, which would require that employee schedules be posted two weeks in advance and would impose penalties for changes to schedules.

OFB will advocate for bills that clarify the sick time law for ag producers and legislation to provide relief to small businesses struggling with the minimum wage increase.

Ag Production

OFB will support legislation to cut red tape and maintain the regulatory flexibility that keeps Oregon family farms and ranches viable from one generation to the next.

There are several proposals that threaten ag production. OFB will:

- Oppose bills prohibiting the use of important

medicines used to keep animals healthy

- Oppose a patchwork of regulations and bills that prohibit the use of important crop production tools
- Oppose cap-and-trade mandates or methane caps
- Oppose legislation to require costly retrofit or replacement of diesel engines and farm equipment

Transportation

With 80 percent of Oregon’s ag products sold out of state — and a continued unstable situation at the port — many Oregon farmers desperately need improved, reliable infrastructure for more efficient distribution.

The Oregon Transportation Commission

has recommended an increase in spending by \$574 million a year to upgrade bridges and roads and relieve congestion through Portland. An investment of this size would likely require a gas tax and fee increase to fund it.

OFB will work on critical components of the statewide transportation package this session.

Budget Challenges

A looming budget shortfall of \$1.7 billion could mean substantial cuts to programs important to Oregon agriculture.

OFB will advocate to keep key agency programs funded and whole, including APHIS Wildlife Services (predator control), CAFO, invasive species prevention, noxious weed control, water quality, and OSU State-wides (Extension Service, Agriculture Experiment Station, and Forest Research Lab).

“Farm Bureau members can help by talking to lawmakers about why these programs are important and how their farms would be impacted if the programs experienced significant cuts,” said Dresler.

With the defeat of Measure 97, OFB will be engaged in revenue discussions this session, including maintaining critical personal property tax exemptions for farmers and ranchers.

Water

Water issues will loom large in 2017. There are already several legislative proposals around water fees, mandatory measurement, and funding for groundwater and instream studies.

“Water is the lifeblood of Oregon’s farms and ranches,” said OFB Public Policy Counsel Mary Anne Nash. “Oregon Farm Bureau has long worked to protect landowner certainty in water use and water rights, while supporting voluntary incentives to increase efficiency.”

Land Use

Once again, 2017 will see a significant number of proposals to alter or modify Oregon’s land use planning system. OFB supports this system and will continue to work legislatively to protect agricultural lands in the state.

Get Involved

OFB will need many farmers and ranchers to help stand up for agriculture at the capitol. Want to get involved? Contact jenny@oregonfb.org.

OFB honors grassroots leaders

Besides doing the important grassroots work of creating and refining OFB Policy, receiving ag issue updates from renowned experts, and enjoying fellowship, Farm Bureau members at the 84th OFB Annual Meeting, Dec. 6-8, 2016 at the Salem Convention Center, honored exemplary leaders for outstanding contributions to Farm Bureau and Oregon agriculture as a whole.

Learn more about each award winner at oregonfb.org. Congratulations to all honorees!

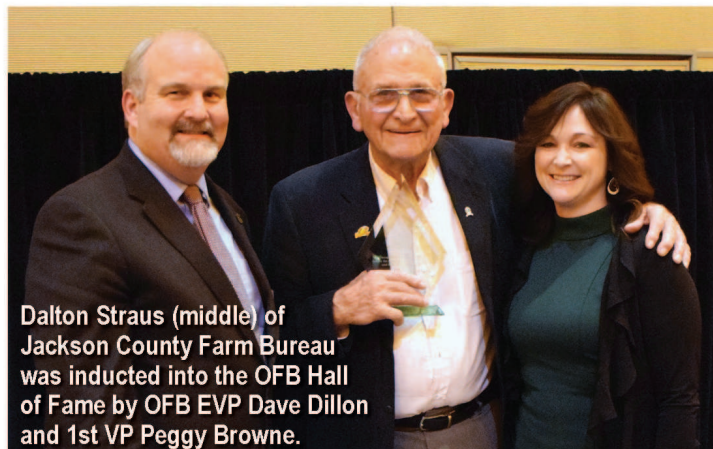
OFB Hall of Fame (OFB’s highest honor, requiring a minimum of 35 years of active Farm Bureau membership): Dalton Straus of Jackson County Farm Bureau

OFB Hall of Fame: Dave Cruickshank of Yamhill County Farm Bureau

Distinguished Service Award: Fred and Marilou Wiebe of Coos-Curry County Farm Bureau

Distinguished Service Award: Bob Dettwyler of Marion County Farm Bureau

Top Hand Award: Kevin Richards of Jefferson County Farm Bureau



Dalton Straus (middle) of Jackson County Farm Bureau was inducted into the OFB Hall of Fame by OFB EVP Dave Dillon and 1st VP Peggy Browne.

County Farm Bureau Action Award: Marion County Farm Bureau

County Farm Bureau Service Award: Roger Collis of Douglas County Farm Bureau

County Farm Bureau Service Award: Dean McAllister of Wasco County Farm Bureau

County Farm Bureau Woman Award: Jeana Hall of Malheur County Farm Bureau

OFB President’s Award: Doug Hoffman, CEO of Wilco

Service to Agriculture Award: Chad Allen of Tillamook County

OFB Award of Thanks: Ron Anglin, Oregon Dept. of Fish & Wildlife

Outstanding County Farm Bureau Secretary Award: Rita Piercy of Malheur County Farm Bureau



Kathy Freeborn Hadley won the Oregon Young Farmers & Ranchers Achievement Award; she was congratulated by Logan Padgett of the OFB YF&R Committee.

Oregon Young Farmers & Ranchers (YF&R) Achievement Award: Kathy Freeborn Hadley of Polk County Farm Bureau

Oregon rep for national YF&R Discussion Meet: Bryan Schmidt of Yamhill County Farm Bureau

Winner of the 2016 OFB Barnyard Battle: Jaccon “Bacon Whisperer” Taylor

Stay current with Farm Bureau’s progress during session with the emailed OFB Legislative Bulletin and OFB Action Alerts. Sign up at oregonfb.org/advocacy



Upcoming events

For more information, visit oregonfb.org.

Jan. 20: Dunn Carney’s 9th Annual Ag Summit, Salem Convention Center, 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Register at dunn-carney.com.

Jan. 24-26: NW Ag Show, Portland Expo Center. *Voting and supporting Farm Bureau members get free entry to this year’s show!* Capital Press subscribers will receive their free pass in the mail, and those without a Capital Press subscription can find their pass in a flyer within their complimentary copy of the Jan. 13 issue.

Feb. 17: Farm Bureau Reception at the Oregon State Capitol, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Farmers, ranchers, lawmakers, and the general public are invited to a free cake and coffee reception hosted by the OFB Women’s Advisory Council.